

REMARKS

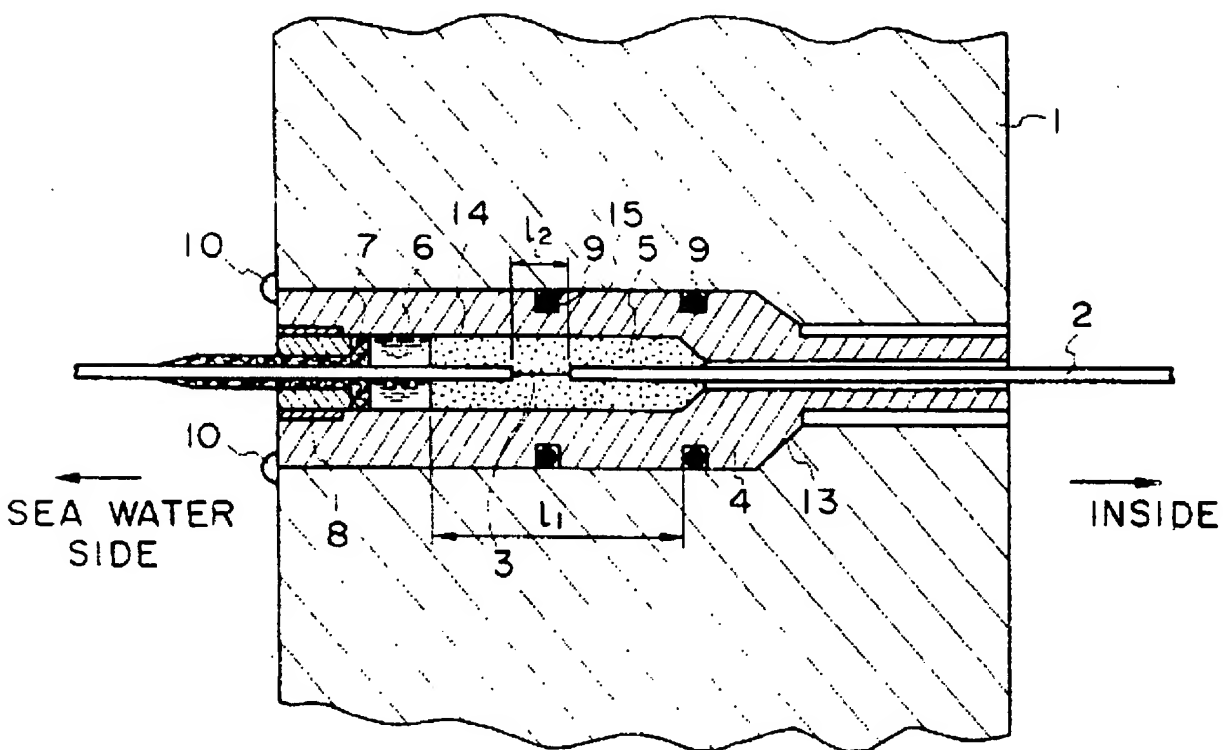
As a preliminary matter, the Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thoughtful examination, allowance of claims 9, 11-13, 15, 17, 18, 24, 37-39 and 49, and indication of allowability of claims 20-22 and 34-36.

Claims 19, 23, 25, 27-33, 35 and 40-48 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Nakai et al. ("Nakai"). Claim 26 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over Nakai in view of Ishiharada.

Independent claims 19, 25 and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Nakai. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

[Remainder of page intentionally left blank]

As the Office Action points out, the noted claims were previously rejected as anticipated by Nakai. In response to that earlier rejection, Applicants amended claims 19, 25 and 33 to recite that metal plating is in contact with the exposed optical fiber. See, *e.g.*, claim 19: “a metal plating in contact with at least a portion of the second region” (the second region having fibers with substantially no coating). In contrast, Nakai exposed fibers in region L2 (which the Office Action equates with the claimed “second region”) are solely in contact with an adhesive 5. This is best shown in Nakai Fig. 1:



There is no metal, let alone metal plating, in contact with the exposed optical fibers of Nakai as recited in any of claims 19, 25 and/or 33. Indeed, the closest Nakai metal surface is metal cylinder 4, which surrounds the exposed fibers in L2 but is separated from and does not have any contact with the exposed fibers L2 due to the presence of adhesive 5. Nakai therefore fails to teach metal to exposed fiber contact as recited in each of independent claims 19, 25 and 33.

Applicants argued this distinction in the response to a prior Office Action, and the Examiner properly dropped the rejection over Nakai in the next Office Action. While the current Office Action acknowledges the prior history of the application of Nakai, it nonetheless takes the position that intervening claims amendments have broadened the claims such that “this [Nakai] reference again reads on the claims.” Applicants traverse this finding.

Applicants amended several claims in response to the last Office Action to address the relationship between the metal plating and the epoxy. However, the language in the claims requiring contact between the metal plating was undisturbed, and thus presents the same distinction in the current claim set that led to the prior withdrawal of the rejection over Nakai. Thus, claim 19 previously and currently recites: “a metal plating in contact with at least a portion of the second region.” Claim 25 previously and currently recites: “a metal-plating in contact with the optical fiber having at least a portion of the cover substantially removed.” Claim 33 previously and currently recites: “a metal plating in contact with at least a portion of the second region.” As discussed above, Nakai simply fails to teach or suggest a metal on exposed fiber contact as recited in independent claims 19, 25 and 33.¹

Accordingly, independent claims 19, 25 and 33 are patentably distinct over the applied art. Similarly, the remaining dependent claims are patentably distinct over the applied prior art for at least the reasons discussed with respect to the independent claims. Withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the same are therefore requested.

¹ The Office Action acknowledges the relevance of the structure (“The structural limitations considered is . . . the structure of the fibers being metal plated”), yet fails to identify what teachings of Nakai supposedly read on the noted claim language.

In view of the foregoing, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and a notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any missing or insufficient fee(s) or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-4293 (Case No. 12492.0276).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Watkins", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Date: November 14, 2007

Scott D. Watkins
Reg. No 36,715
Steptoe & Johnson, LLP
1330 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 429-8056
Fax: (202) 429-3902